

Engaging Families to Improve School Climate



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Family Engagement and School Climate



School Climate –

The enduring quality of organizational life that captures the distinctive tone or atmosphere of a school (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000)

**Academic Rigor and Intensity
Order and Discipline
Teacher Empowerment and Affiliation
Perceptions of Safety
Relationships**

Partnership Climate



The extent to which schools and families perceive each other to be part of a *shared community* that supports and values education, and the degree to which schools and families *work together* to support student learning

The National Network of Partnership Schools



Capacity Building

- Technical assistance

Research-Based

- Research-to-practice
- Practice-to-research

NNPS Members



138 District Members

32 States & Canada

**48% of students
eligible for Free
and reduced-price
meals**

1257 School Members

39 States, CA, & AUS

28.9% Large Urban

78.0% Title I Funded

63.9% Elem. Schools

10.1% K-8 Schools

13.5% Middle Schools

9.1% High Schools

Effective Family Engagement



SYSTEMIC & ORGANIZED

FOCUS ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

IMPROVE EQUITY IN SCHOOLS

A Systemic Approach



Schools are more likely to persist in their work to engage families when these efforts are supported by district leaders

- Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon (2011)

School programs are more likely to improve when they receive more district support for school, family, and community partnerships

- Sheldon (2005, 2007)
- Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon (2011)

The NNPS District Program



**District-level
Organization**

**District-level
Facilitation**

- Create awareness
- Align program & policy
- Guide learning and program development
- Share knowledge
- Celebrate milestones
- Document progress and evaluation outcomes

The NNPS School Program



PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

- **Action Team for Partnerships (ATP)**
- **Annual Plans**
- **Six Types of Involvement**
- **Program Evaluation**

NNPS Program Components



- **Action Team for Partnerships**

- Annual Plans

- Six Types of Involvement

- Program Evaluation

- Team members

- 2 teachers, 2 parents
- Administrator
- Community member
- 2 Students (high school)

- Connection with school improvement team

- Monthly meetings

- Review school goals; Plan, coordinate, and implement partnership activities

NNPS Program Components



- Action Team for Partnerships
- **Annual Plans**
- Six Types of Involvement
- Program Evaluation
- Aligned with school improvement goals
- Focused on student outcomes
 - 2 Academic Goals
 - 1 Non-Academic Goal
 - **Welcoming Climate**
- Diverse strategies to engage family members

NNPS Program Components



- Action Team for Partnerships
- Annual Plans
- **Six Types of Involvement**
- Program Evaluation

Type 1: Parenting

Type 2: Communication

Type 3: Volunteering

Type 4: Learning at Home

Type 5: Decision Making

Type 6: Community
Connections

Attending to Challenges



Parenting

- **Enable families to share information with schools**
- **Provide information to *all* families who want it or who need it**

Communication

- **Clear and understandable**
- **easy-to-use two-way channels**
- **Ideas from families about the design and content of communications**



Parent Forum

Improve
Climate

Parenting

Transition to
Middle School

Connections
Among Parents

Francis Howell Middle School St. Charles, MO

- “Are Everyone else’s parent REALLY Letting them do that?”
- Discussion group
- Middle and feeder elementary school families, teachers, principal
- Topics: bullying, friendships, peer pressure, technology, organization skills

Attending to Challenges



Volunteering

- **Flexible schedules for volunteers and events for working parents**
- **Match time and talents with school needs**
- **Recognize volunteers for assistance at school and in other locations**

Learning at Home

- **Design homework for which students discuss important class work and ideas with their families**
- **Communicate with families ways they can monitor and support learning**



Parent Surveys

Improve
Climate

Increase
Volunteering

Two-way
Communication

Evaluation

Edison Elementary School Kennewick, WA

- Mailed to families
- Return at or by family math night
- Collected information about:
family needs and interests,
ideas to improve communication,
talents and time for volunteering
- Ruffled local hockey tickets

Attending to Challenges



Decision Making

- **Include leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school**
- **Offer training so parent leaders can develop skills to serve as representatives**

Community Connections

- **Inform all families and students about community programs and services**
- **Solve problems of turf, funds, goals, and find places for collaboration**



Clean-A-Thon

Improve
Climate

Community
Connections

Futures Academy No. 37

Buffalo, NY

- Annual spring cleaning of school and neighborhood
- Community collaboration:
Educators, families, & students
University of Buffalo students,
firefighters, city trash collection
- Carnival at nearby park afterward

NNPS Program Components



- Action Team for Partnerships
 - Annual Plans
 - Six Types of Involvement
 - **Program Evaluation**
- Annual progress on program implementation
 - UPDATE Surveys
 - End-of-year Evaluation
 - Event evaluations
 - Exit surveys
 - School climate surveys to families

Research on Climate



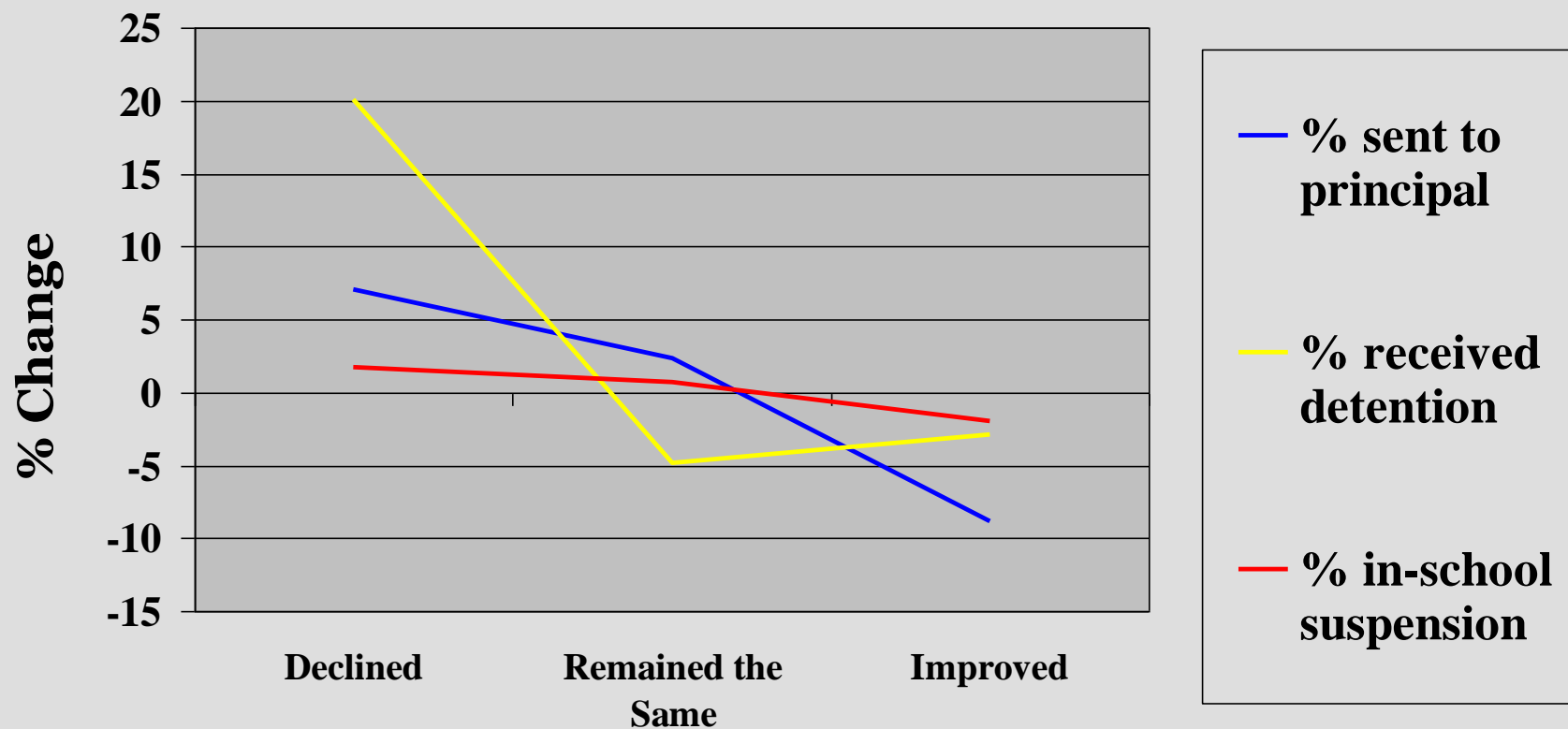
- **A comprehensive approach to school, family, and community partnerships predicted stronger partnership climate**
- **ATP reports of partnership climate predicted higher math achievement test performance**

Research on Climate



- **Stronger partnership program predicted lower use of disciplinary actions from one year to the next**

Change in Disciplinary Actions



Change in Program Quality

Research on Climate



- **Stronger partnership program predicted lower use of disciplinary actions from one year to the next**
- **Student reports of partnership climate predicted family monitoring and help with homework**



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